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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this Child Development Associate (CDA) training module is to help the CDA intern understand the skills that young children bring to the preschool classroom, and the kinds of classroom activities that help children learn. Objectives are stipulated, activities for each objective are suggested, and an assessment checklist is provided. Also included is a study guide which presents information and study questions about types of learning, learning skills, concepts for preschool learning, classroom activities, the role of teacher, and evaluation of setting, learning, and teacher. Also included are a brief pretest and posttest. (Author/SS)

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Competency Based Training Module #36

UNDERSTANDING HOW CHILDREN LEARN

by

Patricia Graves

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

NOTE TO THE INTERN:

This CDA training module has been prepared as a guide for you and your CDA Advisor to help you to develop certain practical skills necessary for your work in an early childhood center. Although it contains many useful ideas, it is not intended to be a self-study program. Many decisions about your training experiences are left up to you and your CDA Advisor. The activities given in this module are "suggested" activities, and should be used if they are appropriate to your learning needs. You or your Advisor may come up with other activities more appropriate for your particular situation, children, or background of experience and training.

Your Advisor will evaluate your performance in each of the objectives. S/he may do so right away on the basis of skills you already have, or s/he may evaluate you after you have done some learning activities, or both. If you think you already have the skills required by some of the objectives, you should ask to be evaluated right away. You may not have to do any activities for some of the objectives. You do, however, have to demonstrate the required skills for your advisor; you cannot just tell s/him that you have the skills. If your advisor has already observed some of the skills before you entered this module, s/he may check you off on those skills without further observation.

When your Advisor has evaluated your performance in an objective area as satisfactory, s/he will initial and date that objective as completed in your copy of this module. When all of the objectives have been initialled, you have completed the requirements of this module and have earned credit. Keep this module as your permanent record of completion, and as a reference to use in your classroom.

As you can see, how fast you are able to complete this module depends on a lot of things: how much time and effort you can put into it; how much help your Advisor can give you; how much experience and training you have already had.

The Arizona/Nevada HSST/CDA Program hopes that you find your participation in CDA a valuable and practical training experience. We would appreciate any suggestions you may have for improvements in the training program and in this module.

UNDERSTANDING HOW CHILDREN LEARN

CDA TRAINING MODULE #36

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This module relates to the following CDA Competencies:*

A. SET UP AND MAINTAIN A SAFE AND HEALTHY LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

B. ADVANCE PHYSICAL AND INTELLECTUAL COMPETENCE

C. BUILD POSITIVE SELF-CONCEPT AND INDIVIDUAL STRENGTH

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* for reference, see the Arizona HSST/CDA "CDA Assessment"

UNDERSTANDING HOW CHILDREN LEARN

INTRODUCTION

You, as a teacher of young children, have both a special opportunity and a special responsibility. You have the special opportunity of working with children during the most exciting part of their school experience - of working with children who come to you excited about life, and needing to learn about everything. For three, four, and five-year-old children, school is a new part of their expanding environment which they approach with great curiosity (and sometimes a little fear). Your special responsibility as a teacher is to provide an environment in which each child is comfortable, and can use his natural curiosity and all of his senses and abilities to learn about his world. You will know you have succeeded if each child approaches first grade with the same excitement, curiosity and eagerness with which he first came to you.

This module will help you to understand the special skills which young children bring to the preschool classroom, and how to use those skills to help each child to expand his world. It will also help you to understand what the preschool environment should look like, and what your role as a teacher should be.

Finally, this module will help you learn to evaluate your center and your own teaching, and to use your evaluations to improve the quality of the children's experience.

PRETEST

1. Write down five things you now know about children and learning.

   a.

   b.

   c.

   d.

   e.

2. Write down five questions you have or things you WANT to know about children and learning.

   a.

   b.

   c.

   c.

   e.

3. List some of the learning goals you have for children you work with.

OBJECTIVES, ACTIVITIES, ASSESSMENT

CDA Intern's Name_____

Date of Entry_____Date of Completion_____

OBJECTIVES	ACTIVITIES
1. The intern will be able to recognize the abilities children possess when they confront a learning situation.	1. a. Complete reading and activities on pages 6-7. b. Discuss your learning with your advisor.
ASSESSMENT _____ date/initial	
2. The intern will be able to set up a classroom and plan activities which will help children use the abilities in Objective #1, as tools.	2. a. Do the activities on page 8. b. Discuss with your advisor.
ASSESSMENT _____ date/initial	
3. The intern will understand the four types of learning explained on page 10.	3. a. Complete reading and activities on page 10. b. Discuss your learning with your advisor.
ASSESSMENT _____ date/initial	
4. The intern will demonstrate an understanding of how classroom activities foster the types of learning discussed in Objective 3, by completing the chart on page 11.	4. a. Complete the chart on page 11. b. Discuss with your advisor.
ASSESSMENT _____ date/initial	
5. The intern will learn the seven facts about children and learning explained on pages 12-17.	5. Complete reading on pages 12-17.
ASSESSMENT _____ date/initial	

OBJECTIVES	ACTIVITIES
6. The intern will demonstrate an understanding of the facts in Objective 5 by carrying out the activities on pages 12-17 and by discussing the results with his/her advisor.	6. a. Complete the activities on pages 12-17. b. Discuss the results with your advisor.
ASSESSMENT _____ date/initial	
7. The intern will demonstrate an understanding of learning skills which children should be developing during the pre-school years.	7. a. Complete the reading and activities on pages 18-21. b. Discuss with your advisor.
ASSESSMENT _____ date/initial	
8. The intern will find and/or plan classroom activities which give children practice in each skill discussed in Objective 7.	8. a. Find and/or plan classroom activities which give children practice in each skill discussed in Objective 7. Some activities you can try yourself are on pages 22-24. b. Discuss with your advisor.
ASSESSMENT _____ date/initial	
9. The intern will be able to identify concepts which are appropriate for preschool learning.	9. a. Complete the reading and activities on pages 25-28. b. Discuss with your advisor.
ASSESSMENT _____ date/initial	
10. The intern will be able to prepare a teaching plan for one of the concepts discussed in Objective 9.	10. a. Prepare a teaching plan for one of the concepts discussed in Objective 9. Use the format on page 29. b. Discuss with your advisor.
ASSESSMENT _____ date/initial	

OBJECTIVES	ACTIVITIES
11. The intern will be able to verbally describe the role of the teacher in the child's learning.	11. a. Complete the reading and activities on pages 30-32. b. Discuss with your advisor.
ASSESSMENT _____ date/initial	
12. The intern will demonstrate his/her understanding of this role through lesson planning and class performance.	12. a. Complete the questions on pages 33 and 34. b. Discuss with your advisor.
ASSESSMENT _____ date/initial	
13. The intern will be able to evaluate the learning environment in his/her classroom.	13. a. Complete Parts A and B of the Evaluation Form on page 35. b. Discuss the results with your advisor.
ASSESSMENT _____ date/initial	
14. The intern will be able to evaluate his/her own performance in the role of teacher in that environment.	14. a. Complete Part C of the Evaluation Form on page 36. b. Discuss the results with your advisor.
ASSESSMENT _____ date/initial	
15. The intern will list specific improvements which need to be made.	15. a. List specific improvements which need to be made using the results from the Evaluation Form. (Space is provided on page 36.) b. Discuss with your advisor.
ASSESSMENT _____ date/initial	

FACTS ABOUT CHILDREN AND THEIR LEARNING

Children have tools which they bring to the situation to help them learn. A good program allows children to use ALL their tools daily:

1. An Active Body

   Children use their physical activity to explore, experiment, and manipulate their environment. THEIR PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES ARE TRANSLATED INTO LEARNING.

   EXAMPLE: A child playing with blocks arranges and rearranges them, succeeds and fails in his efforts, and learns about size, shape, and quantity as he works out his plans for building.

2. Five Senses

   Adults learn mostly by seeing and hearing, although they do use other senses. Children learn from all five senses. They have not developed the specialized and somewhat limiting skill of learning about the world with just their eyes and ears, because they lack many experiences adults have had. They must sharpen and use all five senses - touch and feeling, seeing, hearing, smelling, and tasting. A LEARNING EXPERIENCE MAKES USE OF MANY, IF NOT ALL SENSES. IF YOU WANT TO TEACH A CHILD SOMETHING, YOU MUST ENCOURAGE HIM TO USE AS MANY SENSES AS POSSIBLE.

   EXAMPLE: You are teaching about fruit. Listening to you tell about an orange is the least effective way for a child to learn what an orange is like. Seeing one is better. But best of all is holding, peeling, seeing, smelling, and eating an orange.

3. Curiosity and a Need to Learn

   From infancy on children reach out, test, and try new things. Much learning is physical at first, such as crawling and walking. The need to communicate motivates children to learn to talk, an act of physical and mental learning. As children get older they want to know about the world around them, and they want to know and do what adults around them know and do. They need to understand what is happening around them and grow toward independence. HALF OF THE TEACHER'S JOB IT TO LET THE CHILD SATISFY HIS NEED TO LEARN; ENCOURAGE HIS INDEPENDENCE AND KEEP HIM CURIOUS.

4. Experience

   From birth all the way through life we are accumulating experiences serving as a foundation for further learning. In the preschool classroom there is great variety in what experiences children have had. One purpose of Headstart is to provide experiences which may be lacking. Every child has had experiences with objects and relationships with people on which he has based much information about his world.

TEST ON FACTS ABOUT CHILDREN AND LEARNING

TOOLS CHILDREN BRING TO THE CLASSROOM

SOME OF THE STATEMENTS BELOW ARE CORRECT BASED ON THE INFORMATION ON THE PRECEDING PAGE. OTHERS ARE INCORRECT. MARK OUT THE INCORRECT STATEMENTS. DON't LOOK BACK UNTIL YOU ARE DONE.

1. Physical activity has nothing to do with learning.
2. Children translate activity into knowledge.
3. Children learn most by being quiet and listening.
4. Using several senses in a learning situation is confusing to a child.
5. Because of their lack of experience with the world, children must use many senses in each learning situation to make it meaningful.
6. Curiosity often gets children in trouble and should be discouraged by parents and teachers.
7. One of the greatest things a teacher has going for him/her is the fact that the child is curious.
8. Children have a deep-seated need to know about things.
9. Early experiences serve as a foundation for later learning.
10. Experiences a child has before entering school have nothing to do with his learning.
11. Children who are sitting in desks most of the day are able to satisfy their curiosity and need to learn.
12. A chalk talk on different kinds of houses is a good learning activity for young children about homes.
13. Making andusing different kinds of houses from boxes is a good learning activity for teaching about homes.
14. Children actively moving about the room trying things learn less because they listen less.

If you marked through 1, 3, 4, 6, 10, 11, 12, and 14 go on to the next page.

If you left any of the above unmarked, go back to page 6 and read it again; answer questions again.

ACTIVITIES RELATED TO TOOLS CHILDREN BRING INTO THE CLASSROOM

1. List five activities in your classroom where the child can use physical activities as a learning tool.

ACTIVITY	POSSIBLE LEARNING
a.	
b.	
c.	
d.	
e.	

2. Plan a new activity in which the child can use physical activities for learning.

ACTIVITY	POSSIBLE LEARNING

3. Plan, describe and carry out a classroom activity involving at least four (4) senses using the following steps:

   a. List what you want children to learn:

   b. Try teaching about this with words only. What happened?

   c. Add experiences for other senses (touching, hearing, feeling, tasting). What happened?

   d. How do you feel about the experiment? When did the children seem to be learning most? When were they the most interested?

con't on page 9

ACTIVITIES RELATED...Con't.

4. a. Explain how your classroom is set up to foster curiosity in your students.

   b. How could you make it better?

5. a. List some experiences you feel your children have had which help them learn now.

   b. List some experiences which your children lack.

FOUR TYPES OF LEARNING

NOTE: This material is presented to give the intern an overall picture of learning. Because other modules deal with the first three kinds of learning, this module will confine its content to the last one, cognitive learning. However, the material and techniques presented will also be helpful in fostering the physical, emotional, and social growth as well.

There are four kinds of learning listed by many authorities. All or most of the learning a child does falls into one of these groups.

1. Physical Learning

   Development of the body. Large and small muscle development. Motor skills such as eye-hand coordination. These skills are important for their own sake - a healthy, growing, developing body. In addition, they are tied closely to other learning such as mental development.

2. Social Learning

   Development of the ability to live and work with other people. Learning the social skills and rules needed to live within society. Developing working relationships with other people.

3. Emotional Learning

   Gaining experience in recognizing and handling emotions. Developing a self-concept. Using creative media to express feelings and learning to deal with emotions of other people.

4. Cognitive or Intellectual Learning

   Related to intellectual or mental development. Learning skills of how to learn (logical thinking). Math, science, and language are examples of cognitive learning.

Give an example of an activity in your classroom which characterizes each type of learning.

1. Physical:

2. Social:

3. Emotional:

4. Cognitive:

A SURVEY OF SOME COMMON CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES AND HOW THEY PROMOTE LEARNING

ACTIVITY	PHYSICAL	SOCIAL	EMOTIONAL	COGNITIVE
ART	Fine motor skill. Eye-hand coordination.		Self expression. sharing ideas and feelings. Satisfaction and pride.	Experience with media - how it acts and works.
BLOCKS	Large and small muscle coordination.	Working with others. Community role play.	Satisfaction and success feelings.	Quantitative - size and shape experience. Planning skills.
HOUSE-KEEPING	Fine and large motor skills.	Role playing home situations.	Expression of feelings and needs of home and family roles.	Vocabulary building. Planning and carrying out play.
WATER TABLE	Small muscle - pouring, whipping, stirring.	Working sociably with other children.	Satisfying need for fluid (messy) play.	Properties of water by itself and in combination with other objects.
LIBRARY		Learning about life, roles, occupations, interactions from stories and pictures.	Sharing of experiences with characters in books.	Information about the world, people, and animals.

ADD THREE (3) OTHER AREAS YOU HAVE TRIED

COGNITIVE LEARNING

Headstart centers are arranged in interest centers. The kind of classroom in which children are free to use these centers is often called an open classroom.

Pretend a visitor comes into your room. The visitor says, "Those children are just playing." How would you answer him?

ANSWER NOW:

ANSWER AGAIN AFTER YOU HAVE READ AND DONE THE ACTIVITIES IN THIS SECTION OF THE MODULE - COGNITIVE LEARNING:

FACTS ABOUT COGNITIVE LEARNING IN SMALL CHILDREN

1. Children have needs which must be met before they can learn.

   a. Physiological needs (need to satisfy hunger and thirst, rest, and shelter).

   b. Safety needs (need for security and lack of threats from the environment).

   c. Love needs (need for love, acceptance, and affection).

   EXAMPLE: A child who is hungry cannot concentrate on exploring his environment.

   EXAMPLE: A child who is not secure and safe and protected will hesitate to reach out, explore, and try new things.

   Prove it for yourself. Think back to a time when you were at a meeting or class and were getting hungry. After a point, did you stop paying attention and think mostly about lunch?

   Now think of a group you have been in where you feel shy. Perhaps you felt they all knew more than you did and thought your contributions were silly. Everyone has been in such groups at one time or another, such as a class or party. Now think of a group where you felt you belonged, a class where you knew something about the subject already or a party where you knew and liked everyone. Which of these groups made you feel open, ready to experiment, think aloud, express a new idea?

   Why?

ACTIVITY:

Observe the children in your classroom. Are there children whose other needs are not being met before you try teaching them?

CHILD'S INITIALS	NEEDS NOT MET	WOULD COULD YOU DO?

For help with this you will need other modules and perhaps discussions with your advisor.

2. Children think and perceive things differently than adults.

A young child thinks egocentrically (from his own point of view). He is incapable of "seeing" things as someone else does.

EXAMPLE: A child lost in a store will not usually say, "I am lost." He will say, "My mother is lost."

If you were lost in a strange city, however, and are wanting to find your motel, you would say, "I am lost." not "The motel is lost."

Prove it for yourself. Quantity is a concept young children have not mastered, even if they have learned to count. Try this experiment with several children and record your answeres. Try it with several four year olds and then some eight or nine year olds.

EXPERIMENT:

Use one large graham cracker, sandwich, cookie, or piece of toast (anything that can be easily divided).

Ask the child if he would like to have the food. Give it to him. Now ask if he wants more (graham cracker). If he says yes, break the cracker in half and give him both pieces. Ask him if he has more now than he had before.

Child #1

Child #2

Child #3

Child #4

(When the author tried this experiment, every four year old happily believed he had more food to eat when broken in half. They knew two was more than one.)

You and I know the concept of dividing and the concept of conservation. We know the amount did not change with the shape or number of pieces. This is the difference in our thinking and the young child's.

3. Children learn differently than adults.

Adults learn a great deal from verbal experiences; we read or hear much of what we know. This process requires a kind of thinking, physical maturity, and a background of experiences the young child does not have. Children must, therefore, have direct experiences with concrete objects in order to learn.

EXAMPLE: If I tell you about the number 10, you know how many I am talking about. If you want to tell a young child about 10 beads, he must have the beads before him to feel, see, and move inorder to understand. (In order to understand how the young child is thinking, think about one billion dollars. That is a number concept so beyond our experience that most of us are as vague about it as a four year old is about 10.)

EXAMPLE: In spite of how much we learn by reading and hearing, we still learn many things through direct experiences, as a child does. In driving, for example, you cannot learn to drive without getting in a car and doing it any more than a young child can learn about fruit without seeing, feeling, smelling, and eating it. You perform a direct, concrete act when you drive the car. The child performs a direct concrete act when he peels, slices, and eats the fruit.

Prove it for yourself.

TASK: I will describe a vegetable for you; please draw what I have described.

This vegetable is orange, about 8 inches long, about 1 inch in diameter at one end, and comes to a point at the other end.

Did you draw a corrot? You have had enough experience with orange, length, and shapes to process the language I used. Now ask several children to draw the vegetable, giving them only the same description. Now give them a carrot to see and hold. Ask them to draw again. Save the drawings to show your advisor.

Now these children have a partial idea of a carrot. Can you use words to tell the child how a carrot tastes and know he understands? It is almost impossible to translate taste experiences into words unless you can relate comparisons of extremes, such as sour like a lemon. And that only works if the listener has tasted a lemon. What is the direct way of teaching these children how a carrot tastes?

4. There are patterns of learning which most children follow.

Children begin learning as a physical act. Concrete (real) objects must be handled and manipulated in order for the child to learn.

As they gain experience through this manipulation, they gradually learn to recognize, learn, and substitute two dimensional objects (pictures).

Later they can use language to stand for the objects and the pictures, first in speaking, and later in written words.

EXAMPLE: A very young child must have a cat to feel, watch, and hear to understand what a cat is. As he grows older, because he has seen many cats, he can then recognize one from its picture and remember how they felt and sounded. Still later, he can recall what a cat is like when you say the word, "cat". Finally he will recognize the word "cat" when it is written down, and that calls to mind his concept of "cat" based on all those past experiences.

IF HE HAD NEVER FELT, HEARD, OR SEEN A REAL CAT MANY TIMES FIRST, HE WOULD NOT UNDERSTAND THE WORD WHEN HE HEARD OR READ IT.

5. Learning and language are not necessarily tied to each other.

Children have words for many things which they do not understand. Children also know many things they do not have words for.

EXAMPLE: A child can match all the red blocks, showing he knows the concept "red" long before he learns the words, "These blocks are colored red". He has the concept before the word.

EXAMPLE: Think of something your students have never seen before, such as a streetcar, guava, or pelican. Now teach a child to say the word, "streetcar", for example. Because he can now say the word does not mean he knows what a streetcar is; he has the word, but not the concept.

6. Children learn through play.

Play includes those activities children engage in when they are exploring, manipulating, and learning about their environment. As they use toys and games and equipment, children are having concrete experiences with objects. They are also learning social skills, physical skills, and gaining emotional experience. An adult unfamiliar with the learning needs of children may observe a preschool classroom and come away feeling that those children are just playing and not learning. What he means in large degree is that they are not learning the way he learns. An adult who understands that children must learn through activity and manipulation will see much learning going on in that room.

Emily is sitting at the table with small cubes. She stacks them, knocks them down, builds a house with them, and makes patterns with the colors. She is both playing and learning.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE THINGS EMILY MAY BE LEARNING?

Tom is at the water play table. He is using a mixer, funnel, cups, and sponge to play with. He is learning and playing too.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE THINGS TOM MAY BE LEARNING?

7. Learning is an indvidual activity.

Children select from the environment what they will learn and each child learns at his own speed. Physical maturity, past experiences, and personality help determine individual differences in learning.

The teacher structures the experience not by teaching a specific fact, but by setting up the room in such a way that children will select some of the things he/she wants to teach, and so that he can learn it in his own way at his own speed.

EXAMPLE: Tom is sitting in a small group where a teacher is telling them about the number "5". He wiggles, squirms, looks out the window, and gets into trouble.

WHAT IS TOM LEARNING?

a. About the number "5".

b. That numbers and school are unpleasant.

EXAMPLE: Bill is working with puzzles he selected which have matching groups of 5.

WHAT IS BILL LEARNING?

a. About the concept "5".

b. Numbers are dull.

Children at different learning levels or with different needs at the moment will learn different things from the same experience and materials.

EXAMPLE: Water play table set up with sponges, cups, strainer, beater, cups, soap, and food coloring.

Tom learns the properties of water, that it flows through some substances and not others.

John may notice some objects float and that some sink; he experiments with this.

Jane improves pouring skills, a physical learning accomplishment.

Sally may discover what happens when various things are added to water, food coloring, and soap.

Ann, by using small bottles, mixes colors and learns that green is made with yellow and blue food coloring.

LEARNING SKILLS

As children grow, they develop skills which help them learn more from the world around them and gain more from the experiences they are having. The preschool setting can do a great deal to help all children develop these skills.

Some of these skills are:

1. Sensorial training.

   As we have said, the young child learns by using all of his senses, hearing, feeling, seeing, smelling, and tasting. The better he can use his senses, the better he can learn from an experience. Activities which will help might include: tasting parties, guessing what is in a jar by smelling, visual discrimination games, and listening games.

2. Physical skills.

   Physical skills are related to learning. Children learn by doing; the more they are able to do, the more they are able to learn. Large muscle activities help the child orient himself and objects in space. They help the child to explore the world with his whole body - to test and measure his surroundings. Small muscle activities foster skills of eye-hand coordination and perception.

3. Classification skills.

   Learning to put things together in groups according to some physical characteristic or some abstract characteristic (such as their use). Classification tasks help children think about and notice the size, shape, color, and use of objects with which they are familiar.

4. Discrimination.

   Selecting likeness and differences in objects or in their use helps children learn to think abstractly and make visual discriminations.

5. Seriation.

   These skills include ordering and placing ideas or objects in order by some characteristic, such as time sequence, size, weight, shades of color and texture. These tasks, in addition to teaching about time, size, etc., also teach the skills of following a pattern, arranging things in order, and fostering orderly thinking later on.

6. Verbalization.

   Using and understanding verbal symbols (words) for objects, relationships, and concepts is an extremely useful and necessary skill. This includes vocabulary building, and practice in adding words to the tasks listed above.

BE SURE YOU CAN EXPLAIN TO YOURSELF THE MEANING OF EACH OF THESE TERMS BEFORE YOU TURN THE PAGE!!!

ACTIVITIES TO FOSTER LEARNING SKILLS

The following are examples of activities which could be used to foster each skill. Check the ones you have in your classroom now, and list in the blank spaces ones you have which are not already listed.

SENSORIAL TRAINING

_____ Sniffing jars in which the child guesses the contents by smelling.

_____ Feely box, a box in which a child reaches and guesses the contents by feeling.

_____ Listening games, such as closing one's eyes and guessing what makes a particular sound.

_____ Tasting parties, at which children taste new foods they have never tasted before, or taste and identify foods without seeing them first.

_____ Visual discrimination activities such as puzzles.

List here new activities you plan to fill this need:

PHYSICAL SKILLS

_____ Use of blocks, water and sand, active games, and unstructured large muscle time. (Large muscle)

_____ Art activities, cutting, lacing, and puzzles. (Small muscle)

List here new activities you plan to fill this need:

CLASSIFICATION (GROUPING AND MATCHING)

_____ Putting toys away, setting the table, and arranging the classroom.

_____ Sorting and matching games, and flannel board activities for grouping. (Examples: Real or pictures of small objects and boxes for putting them together in a variety of ways; doll furniture or pictures of furniture to be grouped into appropriate rooms; pictures of objects to be sorted by their use (toothbrush, soap and towel; fork, bowl, and cup; ball, doll, and tricycle).

con't on next page

CLASSIFICATION (con't)

List here activities you plan to add to fill this need:

DISCRIMINATION OF LIKENESSES AND DIFFERENCES

Children see many likenesses and differences in all the materials with which they play. The best help can come from casual opportunities as they arise.

EXAMPLE: A child is playing with blocks; the teacher may ask, "How are these two blocks alike? The same size? That's right; how are they different? One is red and one is blue."

At the table you might ask what is different about a spoon and a fork. If the children understand the concept "different", you will get physical characteristics as an answer, i.e., "This one has a bowl." and "This one has points." Ask how they are the same. Some responses may be, "Both have a handle." and "Both are used for eating."

Watch for opportunities to have this kind of conversation with the children. You may need to use words such as "same" and "not the same", instead of "alike" and "different".

List below at least three incidents in which you have had a chance to practice this exercise with the children. Describe what happened and what answeres children gave.

1.

2.

3.

SERIATION ACTIVITIES

_____ Opportunities to place blocks in order of size.

_____ Dowel sticks cut different lengths for size ordering (linoleum strips work well, too).

_____ Cards, picture, and flannel board cutouts to be arranged.

_____ Picture cards showing a sequence of events for children to arrange (first and last positions - such as child climbing a slide, sitting on top, going down).

_____ Tablets with shades of color or grades of sandpaper to be arranged by texture or shade.

_____ Plastic bottles filled with different amounts of water and sealed for arranging by amount.

_____ Boxes sealed and containing different objects to be arranged by weight.

List here new activities you plan to fill this need:

VERBALIZATION

This is language experience, and it should not be planned as a separate experience. Vocabulary building and using words are to take place while the child is doing other things. This means the teacher is there while the child is playing and adds the words for what he is doing, such as, "I see you are pouring the water from the small cup into the big cup". Words the teacher wants the child to learn are pouring, big and small.

List at least one experience you have done in which you taught new words in the context of what the child was doing.

LIST AT LEAST THREE (3) QUESTIONS YOU WOULD LIKE TO DISCUSS WITH YOUR ADVISOR CONCERNING THESE SKILLS AND THEIR USE IN THE CLASSROOM.

SKILLS YOU CAN TRY FOR YOURSELF

Tyr out these skills yourself.

On the following pages you will find a group of picture cards (page 23) and some word cards (page 24). Cut them out.

CLASSIFICATION SKILLS: Put together all the cards that are objects you eat with.

Put together all the objects you wear.

DISCRIMINATION: You will need cards numbered 1, 2, 3, and 4.

Pick up all the cards that you do NOT wear.

SERIATION: You will need cards numbered 7, 8, and 9.

Pick up the largest tree. Place it on the table; now the next largest tree, and place it next to your first one. Now pick up the smallest tree, and place it next to the last one.

PHYSICAL SKILLS: Use your hand to measure your table. How many hands across is it?

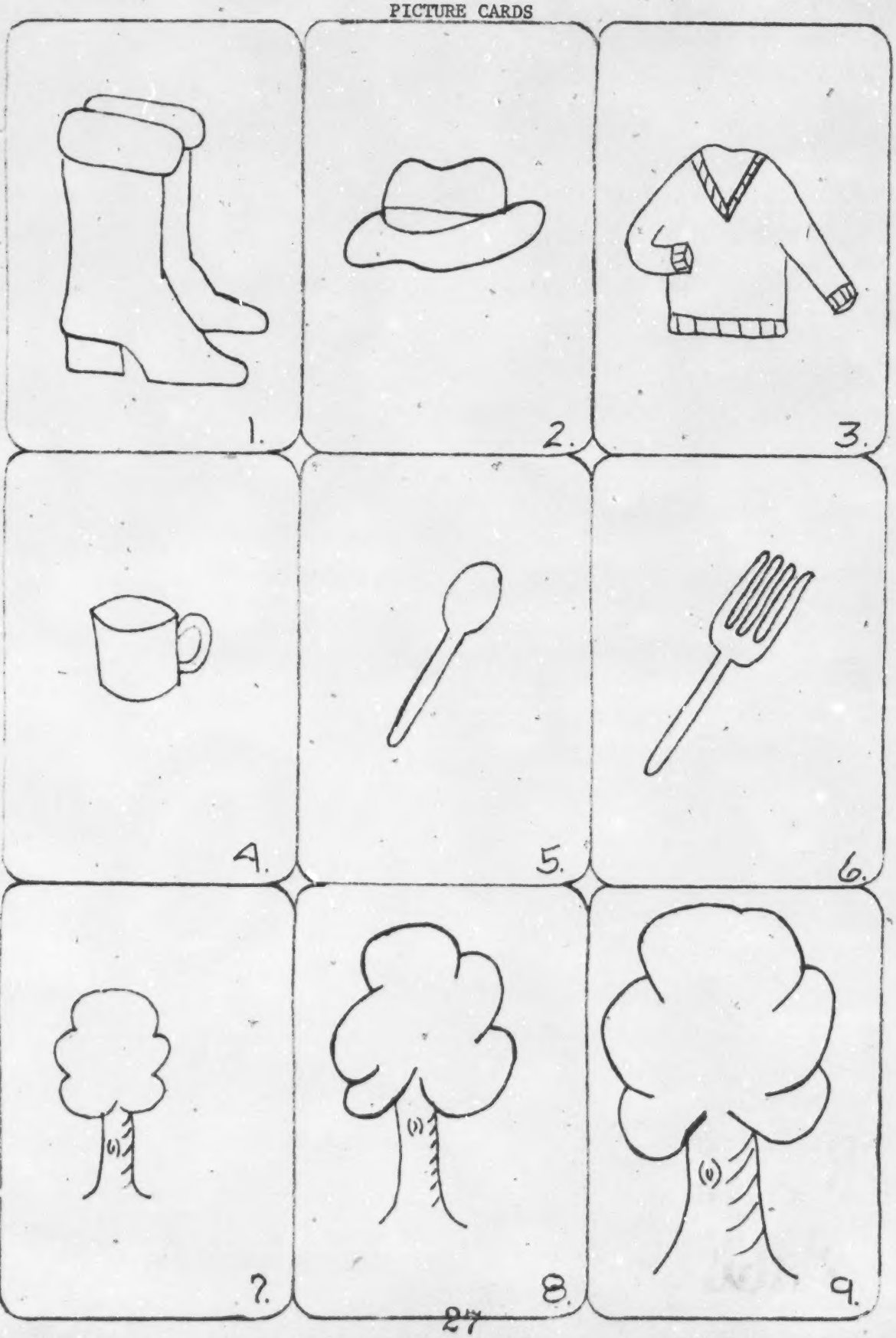
Use your legs to measure the room. How many steps is it across the room?

The children are not counting such things as they move about the room, but they are gaining experience with size and distance that will help them later.

SENSORIAL TRAINING: Close your eyes; ask someone else to put two different foods before you. Guess by smelling, then by tasting, what they are.

VERBALIZATION: Think of snow. How many words might you want to point out as the children held a bucket of snow. (Pick out the word cards you would emphasize.)

PICTURE CARDS



WORD CARDS

Melting	Hard
Warm	Cold
White	Blue

CONCEPTS FOR PRESCHOOL LEARNING

In addition to the skills children are learning during the preschool years, their activities bring them into contact with an ever growing number of concepts. Listed below are some of the concepts preschool children often learn. Add to the list other concepts you feel your students are learning or should learn during the year.

BASIC COLORS:	Red, blue, yellow, green, orange, black, and brown.
BASIC SHAPES:	Square, circle, and triangle.
SPATIAL RELATIONSHIPS:	Such as in, out, over, under, up, and down.
COMMUNITY INFORMATION:	Local people, occupations, and places.
SEASONAL INFORMATION:	Brief exposure to events, natural changes, holidays, customs.
HEALTH:	Foods, cleanliness, safety rules.
OTHER CONCEPTS:	Add to the list other concepts you feel your students are learning or should learn during the year.

How these concepts should be taught, or how children do learn them is one of the key points in this module. In order to see if you remember material covered so far, please answer the following questions. Mark out the incorrect answers.

A preschool teacher wants to teach her class about colors. She should:

1. Sit children in a circle and spend 30 minutes telling them about colors.
2. Provide activities for children to use and mix colors in art work.
3. Assume that children who cannot name the colors know nothing about them.
4. Assume that children who can say words like red and yellow can apply them to the appropriate colors.
5. Recognize that children may match and use colors long before they can name them.
6. Provide matching, discrimination, and classification games which give experience with color.
7. Show children pictures of colored objects but not allow them to touch the pictures because they might get them dirty.
8. Plan physical activities and games in which colors are a key factor.

(Key on next page)

Key to questions on page 25:

You should have marked through 1, 3, 4, and 7. If you missed any of these, go back and reread pages 13-17.

In order to teach a particular concept, the ability to prepare a task analysis is helpful for a teacher. Task analysis is the organizing of a task in steps which start at an easy level and become more difficult as the student is ready.

EXAMPLE:

TASK ANALYSIS DESIGNED FOR TEACHING COLORS

OVERALL OBJECTIVE

The child will have the ability to recognize and name eight basic colors.

BREAKDOWN

SUB-OBJECTIVES	ACTIVITIES WHICH DEMONSTRATE THIS OBJECTIVE
Visual recognition	Child can match colored circles correctly. Child groups different objects into correct colors.
Generalization	Child can find most "red" (or blue or yellow) objects throughout the room, demonstrating that he recognizes the color wherever he finds it.
Discrimination	The child can group objects that are the same color and not the same color. Given three red circles and one blue circle, the child can remove the circle that is not red.
Verbal recognition	The child can associate the color with the word when he hears it. "Touch the RED circle." "Touch the GREEN circle."
Verbalization	Child can say the correct word for each color. ("This block is red".)

In teaching colors we can see that many skills are involved: classification, descrimination, visual perception, generalization, and verbalization.

How can the teacher plan activities which give children at each level of the breakdown experience with colors?

List some activities you have used in the past, and indicate which skills are required to perform the activity.

ACTIVITY	SKILLS REQUIRED

The following list contains some activities one teacher used throughout the year.

1. Songs and stories about colors - experience with verbalization and visual perception.

2. Special color days - pin a red circle on each child with a note requesting that he wear something of that color to school the next day.

3. Combining color recognition with active games - children sit in a circle; hold up an orange card; all children who are wearing something orange jump around the circle.

4. Puzzles and homemade bingo and lotto games for matching correct colors.

5. Combining color recognition with foods - The color of the corn is the same as that of the yellow circle on our puzzle. The peas are the same color as Tom's shirt. (Generalization skills are developed through these activities.)

6. Musical colors - large circles of different colored paper are taped to the floor in a circle; children march around, and when the music stops, each child stands on a circle. He is then asked to either name the color of his circle or touch something else the same color, depending upon which he would rather do.

NOTICE: In these examples the child is learning through direct activities. He is singing, listening to stories, jumping around a circle, manipulating objects and cards in games, working puzzles in which he needs color knowledge, and the teacher adds verbalization through pleasant experiences such as meal time.

Children are able to operate on their own individual levels of skill. Children working on visual recognition have cue cards like the orange card held up in the circle game or the choice of touching a matching object. Children working on generalization have the food experiences for help and the opportunity to look for objects to touch. Verbalization is used and encouraged, but not required in all of the activities.

LET'S BE SURE YOU UNDERSTAND THE BREAKDOWN

Color the circles at the bottom of the page and cut them out.

1. Visual recognition of colors.

   Put all the circles that are alike in color together. Did you put the red ones together? Did you put the blue ones together? Did you put the yellow ones together? Notice that you would not need to know the names of the colors to do this.

2. Generalization.

   Let us see if you can recognize the colors in other places. Put your finger on a red circle.

   List 3 things you see in the room that same color:

   1. 2. 3.

   Do the same for blue:

   1. 2. 3.

   Do the same for yellow:

   1. 2. 3.

3. Discrimination.

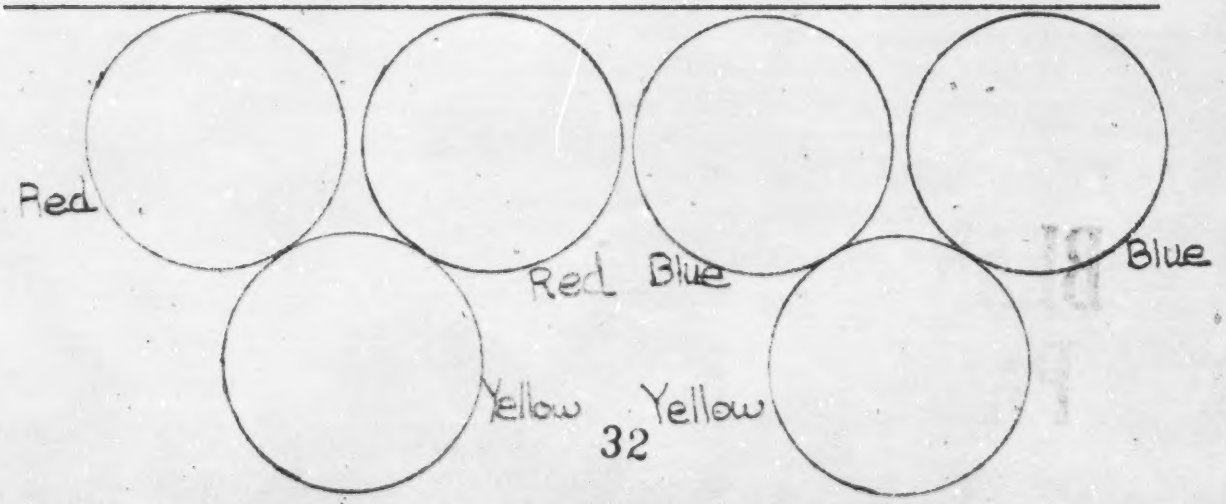
   Place two blue circles and one red circle on the table. Remove the ones which are alike. Place two red circles and one blue one on the table. Remove the one that is NOT like the others.

4. Verbal recognition.

   Place one circle of each color on the table. Touch the red circle. Touch the blue circle. Touch the yellow circle.

5. Verbalization.

   Place one circle of each color on the table. Name the color for each one as you touch it.



PRACTICING WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNED

Select a concept you feel is appropriate for teaching preschool children.

Design a task analysis for the concept you have selected. Plan activities which provide physical and manipulative activities for the children in order to help them learn your concept.

CONCEPT:

OVERALL OBJECTIVE:

BREAKDOWN OF OBJECTIVES:

HOW CAN THE CHILD DEMONSTRATE THIS OBJECTIVE IS MET?

ACTIVITIES:

THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER

One of the questions which concerns many teachers when they begin to realize how children learn is, "What is the teacher doing while the child is playing, manipulating, and experiencing the environment? If it is not the teacher's job to stand before the children and tell them what they should learn, what is her job?"

1. The teacher is a real person who demonstrates that she is friendly and interested in the children. She provides a setting that is safe, secure, and open so that the child feels free to explore and learn. Some children come to school with fears of breaking things, getting dirty, or failing at a task, so the teacher should help create a free space around each child in which he can begin to reach out, touch, and try new things.

   GIVE AN EXAMPLE OF A SITUATION IN WHICH YOU WOULD FULFILL THIS ROLE

2. The teacher accepts each child. She learns to appreciate his uniqueness and her goals for him are for his growth in becoming himself. She avoids setting goals which will make him over into someone else. For example, a child who needs a great deal of physical activities is given a chance to learn through activity.

   GIVE AN EXAMPLE OF A SITUATION IN WHICH YOU WOULD FULFILL THIS ROLE.

3. The teacher studies her children. She observes them and keeps notes of the skills they possess and those they need to practice. She watches for their interests, fears, which activities they choose, and at what level they are able to perform tasks.

   WRITE DOWN THE INITIALS OF ONE CHILD IN YOUR GROUP._____

   WHAT ARE HIS FAVORITE INTERESTS?

   CAN HE RECOGNIZE, MATCH, AND SORT ALL EIGHT COLORS?

   FOR HOW MANY COLORS CAN HE MATCH BOTH THE COLOR AND THE WORD?

   WHAT TASKS GIVE HIM TROUBLE?

4. The teacher is a planner. It is true that the child selects what he will learn from his environment according to his own interests, needs, and readiness. As a teacher, however, you set up much of the selections by the materials you put out. If you are teaching colors, for example, you will put out certain books, certain puzzles, certain matching games, pictures for the wall, and other activities which will encourage children to notice the concept of colors. In addition, you will plan for time in which the children can explore these materials and add related events, such as a walk or group game. Planning means that you know what you want to happen and provide the materials from which the children can make your plans take place.

   GIVE AN EXAMPLE OF A SITUATION IN WHICH YOU WOULD FULFILL THIS ROLE.

5. The teacher is a model. One way children learn is by copying adults. The teacher models correct words for the child to copy. She follows classroom rules. She may casually pick up a puzzle or game no one has tried and work it for herself to see if they will watch her and become interested in trying it themselves.

   GIVE AN EXAMPLE OF A SITUATION IN WHICH YOU WOULD FULFILL THIS ROLE.

6. The teacher is a mediater. She/he brings the child into contact with new things in the room. A magnet might go unnoticed on the science table, so so she/he might pass it around the circle during group time to stimulate interest. She/he might hand a child a new shape of block he has never noticed as he is building. By asking a question, supplying the right word, or suggesting a relationship as the child is playing, the teacher can add new meaning to the experience. Such questions as, "Which block is largest?", "Will the magnet pick up your hair pin?", stretch the experience for the child and lead his thinking in new directions.

   GIVE AN EXAMPLE OF A SITUATION IN WHICH YOU WOULD FULFILL THIS ROLE.

7. The teacher is a facilitator. She is available to help the child do what he is trying to do. "If you need orange paint, we can put some yellow and red paint together." "If you are having trouble with your building, maybe all the blocks are not the same size." She makes suggestions when they are needed, and she provides information and assistance when the child wants help.

   GIVE AN EXAMPLE OF A SITUATION IN WHICH YOU WOULD FULFILL THIS ROLE.

All of these things mean that the teacher must be aware of what is happening in his/her classroom. She/he must be able to move from area to area where she/he is needed. The more adults working in the room, the more the children are able to gain from the experiences they are having.

If possible, observe a teacher working with children in an open classroom; it need not be a preschool. Observe another Headstart teacher.

LIST THE ROLES YOU OBSERVE THAT TEACHER PERFORMING; DESCRIBE BRIEFLY WHAT YOU SAW.

CAREFULLY PLAN A DAY. LIST EXAMPLES OF HOW YOU WILL FILL EACH OF THE ROLES DURING THAT DAY.

DAILY PLAN:

ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

What opportunities might arise for you to be accepting and to help a child feel free to use the environment?

What opportunities might you expect to have for modeling, facilitating, and mediating?

List at least one thing you want to observe during the day.

List an example of how your plans help you plan for some learning you want to take place.

Evaluation is a vital part of learning. It is not easy to evaluate a situation as self-directed as a child's learning. Nevertheless, a good teacher knows where he/she wants the children to go and keeps a constant watch on the progress.

	YES	NO
A. EVALUATION OF THE SETTING		
1. Are children free to explore their environment?	____	____
2. Are children provided materials to manipulate and experiment with?	____	____
3. Is the schedule relaxed, providing enough time for freedom and exploration?	____	____
4. Are special events such as trips or visitors provided often?	____	____
5. Are the children free to select activities for themselves?	____	____
6. Are the children encouraged to work at their own pace on their own interests?	____	____
7. Is the room arranged so children can and want to move about freely?	____	____
B. EVALUATION OF LEARNING (Observe one child)		
1. Is the child using his body, senses, and curiosity in his activities?	____	____
2. Is he gaining experiences upon which he can build in the future?	____	____

3. What new concepts has the child learned recently?

4. What specific tasks can he do now that could not do in the begining of the year?

5. How is he more aware of his environment than he was in the beginning of the year?

6. List serveral things you have observed him learning for himself.

7. What new words has he added to his vocabulary?

con't on page 36

	YES	NO

C. EVALUATION OF THE TEACHER

1. Is the teacher warm and uncritical so that children feel free to try out new things? ____ ____
2. Does the teacher respect the learning modes of each child? ____ ____
3. Does the teacher move among children as a facilitater? ____ ____
4. Does the teacher have definite goals for the learning of each child? ____ ____
5. Does the teacher's positive attitude show in his/her facial expressions and dress? ____ ____

LIST BELOW ANY SPECIFIC IMPROVEMENTS WHICH NEED TO MADE USING THE RESULTS OF THE EVALUATION:

POST TEST

1. Reread the list of five things you knew about children and learning at the beginning of this module. Have you changed your thinking about any of them? Which ones?

2. Look at the list of things you wanted to learn. Are there any still unanswered questions from that list?

3. List the five most important facts you have learned in reading this module.

   a.

   b.

   c.

   d.

   e.

4. How has the study of this module caused you to want to change your teaching?